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## EOC evaluates South Carolina's progress to the 2010 Education Goal and presents annual goals

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Monday's press conference at 11:15 a.m. in the first floor lobby of the Statehouse will include presentations by EOC Chairman Bob Staton and Vice Chairman Alex Martin.*

**Columbia** – South Carolina schools must accelerate the rate of improving student achievement in order to make its 2010 education goal of being in the top half of states nationally, according to a report released Monday by the state's education reform agency.

South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) members presented information at a Statehouse press conference on nine goals and measures for annually evaluating SC's progress to the goal and the committee's action plan for 2005 to support continuous improvement.

The EOC publication, *Where Are We Now? South Carolina's Progress Toward The 2010 Education Goal*, outlines the goals and measures that include student performance on national and international tests and the state's Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT). Graduation rates and drop out rates are reported as well.

EOC Chairman Bob Staton stated that we must strengthen our efforts to evaluate every aspect of our educational system to ensure ALL students achieve – and achieve at high levels.

He said that while progress is being made and student achievement is increasing in some areas, there is still work to be done.

"A quality education system is the foundation for a prosperous, economic future in SC. We must have a well-educated workforce to attract and retain high-paying business and

industries to raise our per capita income,” Staton said. “A better quality of life for all South Carolinians is the ultimate goal.”

During the press conference, Staton highlighted SC’s progress to goals for three of the nine measures as representative of the state’s student achievement levels.

The three goals and measures include:

- ranking in the top half of states nationally on national and international tests;
- ensuring nine out of 10 students score at or above grade level (proficient or advanced) on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT); and,
- eliminating the achievement gap among students of different racial/ethnic groups and different economic status.

“While we have made incremental improvement within the last several years, we are not on track to meet the 2010 goal at present,” reiterated Staton, “we must accelerate our rate of improvement. Educators, parents, students, elected leaders – there is still work to be done.”

For example, he said results for SC’s performance on state, national and international assessments reveals “mixed results.”

On the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the most recent data (2003) reveal 4<sup>th</sup> grade performance on math is meeting the goal, ranking 23<sup>rd</sup> of 50 states; however, 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> grade student performance in reading and science ranks in the low to upper 30s.

SC performance on Terra Nova and the Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) is at or above the national average for most grade levels and subject areas.

Performance is just below the national average on American College Test (ACT), Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams but near the bottom on many college entrance or college level tests such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT).

Although results from the 2004 PACT reveal improvement in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science, performance continues to fall far below the goal.

“In studying PACT results from year to year, there is strong evidence of the need for high expectations in a student’s early years of schooling to maintain higher levels of achievement as they progress through the system. The performance levels decline as students move from elementary to the middle school grades,” said Staton.

Finally, he said schools and the state must focus their efforts on eliminating the achievement gap and cited disparate performance of student groups on the SAT, AP, IB and PACT.

Results of the 2004 PACT show disparities among different ethnic student groups still exist.

“In 2004, the percentage of White students scoring Proficient or above in both English/language arts and mathematics was nearly three times greater than for African-American students,” Staton revealed, “similar disparities are revealed for performance among students who pay for lunch compared to student on free/reduced price meal program.”

Staton credits SC’s gains to classroom teachers and encouraged parents, business and community leaders to support and recognize their hard work.

“At the same time, we must remember that we all have a role in improving our education system and helping all students succeed. And we are all accountable. Educators cannot do it alone,” said Staton.

He said the accountability system, created by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act (EAA) of 1998, also has been instrumental in spurring achievement gains. He cited recognition of the state’s system by several national educational organizations and publications as one of the best in the nation.

The timing for the conference -- held each December -- is to present a comprehensive view of SC’s school achievement as we ready to ring out another year.

“As the legislation session nears, we know our state’s leaders – the Governor and members of the South Carolina General Assembly – are gearing up for some tough decisions,” said Staton, “we hope to use this opportunity to provide evidence of the accomplishments of our education accountability system and to encourage continued investment in support of higher levels of student achievement.

EOC Vice Chairman Alex Martin, one of the five educator members and chairman of the EOC’s Public Awareness Subcommittee, provided information on the committee’s four objectives and actions for 2004-2005 to support continuous improvement.

The objectives are to:

- Continue the implementation and fulfill the responsibilities of the Education Accountability Act;
- develop measures to promote policies and implement practices so that each student is able to earn a state high school diploma;
- strengthen the teaching of reading in our schools; and
- review and revise long-range plans to address strategic issues before South Carolina.

Martin stated that in order to accomplish the 2010 goal and “in support of our mission,” the EOC has established four objectives and defined critical actions for each.

As Director of Career and Technology for Greenville County Schools, Martin stated, “I see the potential results of high quality instruction, active support from parents and community leaders, and informed, data-based decision-making.”

Further information on the nine goals and measures and the EOC's 2004-2005 objectives and critical actions is available on the EOC Web site at [www.sceoc.org](http://www.sceoc.org).

Established by the EAA, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee made up of educators, business persons, and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislature or governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC's educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools.

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